

MICHAEL MOORE'S MOST DANGEROUS COMEDY



Where to Invade Next Discussion Guide

Director: Michael Moore

Year: 2015

Time: 120 min

You might know this director from:

Capitalism: A Love Story (2009)

Slacker Uprising (2007)

Sicko (2007)

Fahrenheit 9/11 (2004)

Bowling for Columbine (2002)

The Big One (1997)

Canadian Bacon (1995)

Roger & Me (1989)

FILM SUMMARY

Michael Moore is known for his tendency to question the status quo, to poke a comical finger at the more questionable policies of his American homeland. Having tackled everything from handguns to healthcare, his work has primarily been directed inwards as he documents real people living real lives on U.S. soil.

In *WHERE TO INVADE NEXT*, Moore leaves the North American continent, with flags in hand ready to plant them on foreign soil. He heads to Europe with a stop-over in North Africa, ready to stake claim to the great policies in action elsewhere as America's own.

Presented as an invasion on some of the most utopian examples of governance alive today, the film maintains a relatively upbeat tone. Never resting for too long on criticisms of American policy, Moore instead lets the happy examples elsewhere do the convincing.

Rather than leaving the humanity of a Norwegian prison or the political potency of women in Iceland feeling resentful of his own nationality, Moore turns it on its head with a statement of patriotism: "These weren't European ideas. These weren't new ideas. These were our ideas." Many of the interviewees point out that many of their own policies mirror the intentions of America's founding fathers.

Taking his cue from the Germans, who actively engage with the remembrance of their past, Moore directs their sentiment at his fellow Americans, "If you acknowledge your dark side and make amends for it, you can free yourself to be a better people and to do well by others."

FILM THEMES

Moore and team travel abroad to investigate many of the policies working so well on foreign soil. Here we list their take-aways from each of the countries they invade.

ITALY: WORK LIFE BALANCE

With one of the highest rates of paid vacation, maternity leave, and honeymoon allowance, not to mention two-hour workday lunches, Italians take the stress out of a working life.

FRANCE: LUNCH AND THE TRUTH ABOUT SEX

School children shun Moore's offer of soda and feast upon a whole-food four-course lunch, and adolescents learn about the realities of sex and respectful relationships. The French say Oui! to life.

FINLAND: LET THEM PLAY!

"They should have more time to be kids, to enjoy life," stated a teacher in Finland. Children spend less time in school, no time doing homework, and lots of time playing, all while ranking at the top of global education stats.

SLOVENIA: FREE SCHOOL FOR ALL

In this eastern European country, school is considered a public good and a basic human right, and a complete college education is afforded to anyone showing up for class, whatever passport a student may hold.

GERMANY: RESPECT AND REMEMBER

Moore is shocked at the civility of working regulations in Germany, where employees are given an equal say in company matters and government funded spa stays prioritize health. As for Hitler and the Holocaust, a policy of acknowledgment and understanding of the past fuels the potential to affect a positive future.

PORTUGAL: HUMANY DIGNITY AND DECRIMINALIZED DRUGS

Portugal's answer to the War on Drugs? Decriminalize their usage and offer free treatment and comprehensive healthcare. In the words of a Lisbon police officer, "Human dignity is the backbone of our society."

NORWAY: BREED FORGIVENESS, NOT HATRED

As a place for rehabilitation, not revenge, prisons in Norway offer a chance for prisoners to rehabilitate and regain humanity. Not even Breivik's killing spree could spark hatred, instead inspiring national unity.

TUNISIA: FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Government funded abortions and free women's health clinics ensure women are in control of their reproduction and in turn their basic rights. Let the individual focus on the private and government the public.

ICELAND: WOMEN ARE THE ANSWER

"When women don't work, nothing works." Strong words from Iceland's first female president, who testifies to the power of the women that changed the tide of a nation, making it both potent and sustainable.

"My mission is to pick the flowers, not the weeds."

Michael Moore

"There is no clash between the profit of the company and the well-being of the people."

Claudio Domenicali, Ducati CEO

"If the world can be saved, it will be by women... They do not do it with war. They do it with words. Women... are looking for peace. They want to save humanity."

Vigdís Finnbogadóttir

FILM FACTS:

- After 2009's "Capitalism: A Love Story," Michael Moore waited six years before releasing *WHERE TO INVADE NEXT*, which had its world premiere at the 2015 Toronto International Film Festival. The film won a number of awards, including the Audience Choice Award at the Chicago International Film Festival, and received many nominations, such as the Critics Choice Award at the Broadcast Film Critics Association Awards.
- As proof of the changing nature of film viewing, *WHERE TO INVADE NEXT* was screened in relatively few U.S. cinemas, grossing \$3.8 million, Moore's lowest-grossing documentary since 1998. As a comparison, his "Fahrenheit 9/11" (2004) is the highest-grossing documentary ever, banking \$119 million in the U.S. alone.
- Moore contemplated the subject matter of this film since the age of 19, when he got his first Youth Hostel card and Eurail Pass. As he traveled across Europe, he was struck by the fantastic ideas he encountered, and when he broke his foot hiking in Sweden, he was in awe of the free medical treatment he received.
- Teachers in Finland, all of which are educated to master's level, spend 600 hours teaching per year, compared with 1,100 hours in U.S. schools.
- Portugal decriminalized drugs in 2000, making it legal to carry a less than 10-day supply (one gram of heroin, ecstasy, or amphetamine, two grams of cocaine, or 25 grams of cannabis).
- While paid time off is mandated in many countries, with Austria providing the world's best conditions with 35 paid vacation days per year, U.S. companies are not required to offer any paid holidays. The U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act ensures that employees are paid minimum wage and compensated for overtime, but it does not require that employers pay sick or holiday time.
- Out of every 100,000 people in Norway, 75 were in prison as of August 2014, compared with 707 per every 100,000 in the U.S. during the same period. Although criminals in Norway can only be imprisoned for a maximum 21 years, judges may add five years after the initial sentence if they deem the prisoner is not yet rehabilitated.
- Rather than researching the film in the pre-production stage, Moore and team spent three weeks preparing and then hit the road, learning things along the way. His shock at learning that the Italian government pays for honeymoons was not staged, as he learned this in real time.
- As of 2016 there have been just over 70 female presidents and prime ministers the world over. Although Iceland's Finnbogadóttir became Europe's first female president in 1980, Sri Lanka's Sirimavo Bandaranaike became the world's first female prime minister in 1960.
- Austria, Estonia, and Canada were filmed but not included in the final cut, as Moore believes that no good film should exceed two hours.

WAYS TO INFLUENCE

1. **Share** *WHERE TO INVADE NEXT* with those in your life. Wherever you live in the world, Moore and team offer plenty of instances to contemplate our common humanity.
2. **Learn** about how the issues raised in the film are addressed in your country/community. Keep informed of the changing ways of the world, and remember to raise your voice by voting—providing you have the right.
3. **Read** the U.S. Constitution, and reflect upon the concepts put in place by the nation's founding fathers. [This site](#) offers an easy means to access this text and provides expert writings on the individual subjects.
4. **Be** inspired by some of the many recipients of [The Hammer & Chisel Awards](#), an award series created to accompany the film's release in collaboration with The Huffington Post, which aims to "honor individuals who have, in their own unique and courageous way, made America a better place for all."

We believe a good documentary is just the beginning...

In a world of sound-bites, documentaries provide an opportunity to think, understand, share, and connect with the world.

They are controversial, divisive, fascinating, unexpected, and surprising. They can be thrillers, dramas, comedies, romance, tear-jerkers, and horror films.

Documentaries provide the perfect topic for meaningful conversations. If you want to talk about the things that matter with people that matter then pick a film, invite your friends, and watch & discuss together. It's as easy as that.

Influence Film Club – We are the conversation after the film.